

## Songs in the Song of Solomon

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Years ago the English steamer Stella was wrecked on a rocky coast. Twelve women were put into a lifeboat, but the boisterous sea immediately carried it away. Having no oars, they were at the mercy of the winds and the waves and they spent a fearful night being tossed about by the raging tempest. They probably would have lost hope if it had not been for the spiritual stamina of one of the ladies, Margaret Williams, who was well known for her work in sacred oratorios. Calmly she prayed aloud for divine protection. Then, urging her companions to put their trust in the Lord, she encouraged them by singing hymns of comfort.

Throughout the dark hours her voice rang out across the water. Early the next morning a small craft came searching for survivors. The man at the helm would have missed the women in the fog if he had not heard Miss Williams singing the selection from Elijah, "Oh, rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him!" Steering in the direction of her strong voice, he soon spotted the drifting lifeboat. While many others were lost that night, these trusting few were rescued by a song!

This lady had a song in her heart, which made its way out of her lips and saved these struggling ladies on the sea. It was the song related to Scripture and its promises. Dear Christian friend, we need to live our lives with a song in our heart as well. God wants us to have a song within our hearts, a melody of gladness and joy. When God puts a song in our heart it's because the Scripture with its precious truths and manifold promises has been dwelling in our hearts.

Colossians 3:16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

The promise of Scripture is this. As we allow God's Word to find a home in our hearts, it's then that we will break forth in singing! We will go through life with a song in our heart. Scripture in the heart means a song in our heart that will make its way through our lips. Others will know that Scripture is deep within our soul. With this song, we will give God the praise of our lips (Hebrews 13:15). As we study about God's truth and promises we begin to build up melody in our hearts to the point that we must release it or we will explode.

I once owned an old air compressor. It's kind of a homemade affair. When I turn that compressor on I usually did not take the air pressure above 80. I was afraid that it might explode. Well, in a similar way, as we study the air compressor of God's Word, it will build up in our hearts to the point that we will explode if we do not let it out in song! And what do we sing about? We sing about Bible themes and truths. We sing Scripture. Scripture is put to song in our heart and it comes out in a song. What we sing revolves around the promises of the Word of God. Colossians 3:16 is talking about teaching one another and encouraging one another through singing or song. Dear friend, the Bible in the heart results in a song coming forth from our lips. When the Bible goes into the heart then a song must come out! What goes in must come out! This is why God's people are to be people of song and praise.

While reading through the Song of Solomon, it's amazing to discover how many songs or at least parts of Gospel hymns, songs and choruses were derived from this song of Scripture. Simply stated, out of this Scripture, there have been portions of songs written. And there is no other Scripture like this in the entire Bible. It is Scripture that relates to Christ and God as being our Great Shepherd. The songs taken from these verses of Scripture revolve around the Lord and the all that we have through Him.

In this study, I would like to take you on a trip through the Song of Solomon and focus on some of those passages that were used to inspire songs, or at least were used as part of various songs or hymns, which have been written throughout the passing years. I've entitled this study as, "Songs in the Song of Solomon." This study was originally written as a tribute to Alfred B. Smith who has graced us with his singing presence within our services. I spoke

about some of these things after a musical presentation by Al Smith who is now in Heaven enjoying God's presence and singing before the throne!

It's appropriate that hymns and songs should be derived from this portion of the Scripture because you will remember that the Song of Solomon is actually a song.

Song 1:1 says:

"The song of songs, which *is* Solomon's."

The Song of Solomon is not simply a book, story, or drama. It is a song. It's a love song of a shepherd's relationship with his bride. It is one long song out of the many songs that Solomon wrote. Solomon was quite a songwriter.

1 Kings 4:29-32

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."

One thousand five songs! Now that's a lot of songs! But what's more interesting to me is that the other 1,000<sup>4</sup> never got into the Bible. God inspired this one song (the Song of Solomon) to be part of the holy text of Scripture. God wanted this particular song in the biblical canon. And what a song it is! It's a song that portrays a love relationship between a Shulamite woman and her shepherd husband. It's from this physical love relationship we discover by extension or application how we should be in love with our Great Shepherd and bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we think of the beauty and fulfillment in a marriage relationship, it pictures the beauty and fulfillment of the believer's relationship with Christ. In fact, Paul in the epistles speaks of our relationship with Christ as one of marriage (Rom. 7:4). It's a relationship of togetherness and enjoyment. Paul also spoke of our spiritual union with Christ as a husband and bride

relationship (Eph. 5:24). So, the imagery of marriage which is presented in the Song of Solomon can be used as a beautiful expression of the marriage that believers enjoy and experience with Christ.

We cannot conclude that the Song of Solomon was specifically written with this purpose in mind (it was written for the marriage relationship) but we certainly can make application of the physical marriage to our spiritual marriage to Christ. Many writers have done this throughout the years when writing about the Song of Solomon and when creating hymns that are derived from the words found in the Song of Solomon. I would NOT go so far to say that the marriage relationship pictured in the Song of Solomon is a type of our marriage relationship with Christ but it does express a beautiful picture of the deep intimacies which every Christian can have with Christ since we are as New Testament believers joined and married to Him. The comparison between Christ and the believer is still a valid comparison and likeness even if it is not the main thought in these passages.

The Song of Solomon in picture format unfolds Christ to our lives. The various songs taken or derived from this song of Scripture point to the beauty of the Lord and our relationship with Him as believers today. Only an atheist would miss the beauty of the Lord that is portrayed in this song.

Song 1:1

“The song of songs, which *is* Solomon's.”

The first song derived from this book or song is entitled “My Song of Songs” which was written by John C. Hallett and Charlotte Arnold back in 1958. John was a great writer of melodies. Since he loved melodies and he loved Jesus, it is no wonder that he writes about Jesus as being his song. In fact, this song sums up his life.

My Song of Songs  
“My heart is filled with melody,  
To Christ my Lord, My very life belongs.  
Since He came in I cannot help,  
But ever sing My Song of Songs.

To think that Jesus died for me,  
My heart is filled with never ending praise.  
I want my life to glorify  
The Savior's name through all my days.

My Song of Songs is Christ my Savior,  
Of Him my heart shall ever sing.  
He fills my life with joyous melody,  
My Song of Songs is Jesus."

This song written by John Hallet and Charlotte Arnold was derived from the very first verse of the Song of Solomon.

Song 1:1

"The song of songs, which *is* Solomon's."

To the believer, "Christ is to be our song of songs." When Solomon wrote these words he was saying that this was his favorite song. Out of all his 1,005 songs, this song was his most treasured song. This one song was the most prized and precious song that he wrote. It was his "song of all songs." It was at the top of his list.

When we understand what Solomon meant by these words, we can readily see how this description fits the relationship that the believer is to have with our own bridegroom and Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Christ should be our "song of songs" in life. This means that Christ should be the dearest and most treasured friend that we have. And this close relationship should translate itself into joyous singing unto the Lord where Christ becomes the believer's highest expression of praise – "my song of songs."

My friend, the Christian life should revolve around a Person – Jesus Christ. Everyday of our lives we are to have a growing intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity is all about Christ. Christianity is Christ! It is about knowing, loving and pleasing a Person – Jesus Christ. It's not about programs, schedules, and following a list of rules. Living the Christian life is not just about taking Bible notes and wearing nice clothing on Sunday morning. It's about a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. It's a life

that revolves around the very One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Therefore, Christ should become our “song of songs” in life. This means that Christ should become the most treasured and prized person in all of our lives. If this is true; if Jesus Christ is our “song of songs,” then we will seek to please Him, rejoice in Him, delight in Him, trust in Him, grow in Him, learn of Him, fellowship with Him, commune with Him, and sing about Him and enjoy His presence. This is why John Hallet wrote:

“My heart is filled with melody,  
To Christ my Lord, My very life belongs.  
Since He came in I cannot help,  
But ever sing My Song of Songs.

Mr. Hallet must have possessed a very intimate and close relationship with the Lord to be able to write these lovely words. Christ made his heart full of melody. To him, Christ was the answer for joy and fulfillment in life. He realized that his entire life belonged to the Lord and with rapture in his soul he remembered the day when Jesus came into his life and filled him with joyous song. Christ had become everything to this man even as Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). Christ became the most prized and precious person in his life. Christ became his “song of songs” or his highest expression of praise. And Hallet wanted to ever sing about Christ and this wonderful growing and precious relationship that he had with Him. The life of Jesus Christ gave a song in his heart. Christ implanted a song of praise in his soul.

Charlotte Arnold added these words:

“To think that Jesus died for me,  
My heart is filled with never ending praise.  
I want my life to glorify  
The Savior’s name through all my days.”

As she contemplated the gracious death of Christ on her behalf, she was moved to express her endless praise to Him. She wanted to glorify the Lord all her days. This is because Christ was her “song of songs.” Christ was the most precious and dear friend that she had in life and this was evidenced

by a melody of gladness in her heart as she gave Him her highest praise and adoration.

- What kind of relationship you have with the Lord today?
- Do you possess a close intimacy as portrayed in the Song of Solomon?
- Are you in touch with the Lord and revolving your life around His lovely person?
- Is Christ you highest praise?
- Is He your song of songs – your joy and fulfillment in life?

Life is meant to be lived! It is meant to be lived in a close relationship with the Lord. Is there a song in your heart for the Lord today? Does Christ mean more to you than your sports? Does Christ mean more to you than your material gains in life? What is your song in life? What is dear to your heart?

Jesus said in Matthew 6:21:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“My Song of Songs is Christ my Savior,  
Of Him my heart shall ever sing.  
He fills my life with joyous melody,  
My Song of Songs is Jesus.”

The next songs found in the Song of Solomon are treasured by many.

Song 2:1

“I *am* the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of the valleys.”

It seems that in verses one the bridegroom or shepherd is describing himself to his wife in terms of beauty and love. In verse two the husband expresses how she is a lily among the thorns which is likely referencing all the other women in Solomon’s court. She is the true lily of all of them. As the bridegroom speaks of the beauty he shared with her in the marriage relationship, we are reminded of how lovely, precious, and special Christ is toward His own people or children in the spiritual relationship that we have with Him. The marriage between the man and woman is between two

lovers and the same should be true of our relationship with Christ for the Bible says that we are “married to him” (Rom. 7:4). And in this marriage Christ is beautiful to us. He is like the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley to us.

From these words in the Song of Solomon, various hymns have been derived. Let’s consider the Rose of Sharon hymns. The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys were beautiful flowers that express the beauty and loveliness of the Lord. These were common flowers of the field, which portray that Christ is willing to share the beauty and fragrance of His shepherding life with His people.

Let me comment on the Rose of Sharon before talking about the Lily of the Valley. The rose of Sharon was the common blood red flower of the field. The place called “Sharon” was the largest northern coastal plain where the flowers would thrive in all of their beauty and splendor. Perhaps this particular flower referred to the crocus or common saffron flower of the meadow that grew in abundance throughout the plains of Palestine. They would cluster together and enhance the beauty of the fields.

This red flower surely represents the beauty of Jesus Christ. The rose may also give us a beautiful picture of the blood of Christ that would be shed for lost humanity. As the Rose of Sharon, He came to set us free from the penalty of our sin, which was hell, through the shedding of His own blood. There have been various hymns centered upon this theme of the rose. Allow me to name a few in passing.

Various hymns spoke of the Rose of Sharon, even some that we do not normally sing or recognize contained this phrase. Ida A. Guirey wrote a hymn in 1922 called “Jesus, Rose of Sharon.”

“Jesus, Rose of Sharon, bloom within my heart;  
    Beauties of Thy truth and holiness impart,  
    That where’er I go my life may shed abroad  
Fragrance of the knowledge of the love of God.



Jesus, Rose of Sharon, sweeter far to see  
Than the fairest flow'rs of earth could ever be,  
Fill my life completely, adding more each day  
Of Thy grace divine and purity, I pray.

Jesus, Rose of Sharon, balm for every ill,  
May Thy tender mercy's healing pow'r distil  
For afflicted souls of weary burdened men,  
Giving needy mortals health and hope again.

Jesus, Rose of Sharon, bloom forevermore;  
Be Thy glory seen on earth from shore to shore,  
Till the nations own Thy sov'reignty complete,  
Lay their honors down and worship at Thy feet.

Jesus, Rose of Sharon,  
Bloom in radiance and in love within my heart."

Barney E. Warren wrote a similar hymn in 1900 called "The Rose of Sharon."

"Lord Jesus, my sweet Rose of Sharon,  
My Prophet, my Priest, and my King—  
To Thee I will sing all my praises,  
For blessings Thy mercy doth bring.  
All glory and honor to Jesus,  
Who offered His life on the cross,  
To open a fountain for sinners,  
And purchase a world that was lost.

Sweet Rose of Sharon,  
Blooming above for me"

Dallas Holm wrote a song in the 70's called "Jesus: He is the Son of God" and some of the words in this song mention Christ as the Rose of Sharon.

"The busy streets and sidewalks  
They suddenly grew still

As a Man came through  
The entrance of the city  
As He touched and healed a blind man  
With a little piece of clay  
With trembling lips  
You could hear the people say,

Jesus, Jesus, He is the Son of God,  
Jesus, Jesus, the precious Son of God.  
Sweetest Rose of Sharon,  
Came to set us free,  
Jesus, Jesus, He's everything to me.  
Yes He's all the world to me!

Then the air grew cold  
And the sky turned black  
As they nailed Him to a tree  
There He died for every man  
And every country  
But the price He paid  
And the blood He shed  
Is still changing lives today  
And with joy and praise  
You can hear these people say,

Jesus, Jesus, He is the Son of God,  
Jesus, Jesus, the precious Son of God.  
Sweetest Rose of Sharon,  
Came to set us free,  
Jesus, Jesus, He's everything to me.  
Yes He's all the world to me!"

Jesus is the Rose of Sharon! He is the lovely Savior who has given His life for you and me. There was beauty in Him and in His death even through Scriptures conclude that the Jews in that day saw no beauty in Him.

Isaiah 53:2 says:

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.”

The Jews missed the beauty and splendor of His person and work on their behalf. Isaiah prophetically said that from the standpoint of His marred body upon the cross and His inhumane treatment that there was no beauty in Christ. The nation would turn their back upon Christ as they hung him on the cross and whose face was marred and disfigured more than any man ever was.

Isaiah 52:14

“As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”

Isaiah was speaking from the standpoint of Christ’s disfigurement and horrible appearance as He hung upon the cross. There was no beauty in Him from the standpoint of being a mangled piece of flesh hanging upon a tree. But there was a beauty that went beyond the eye when Jesus hung on Calvary’s cross. There was the beauty of His gracious sacrifice for lost hell-doomed sinners. He was for us the beautiful Rose of Sharon!

His death was horrible from the standpoint of His treatment by men. But it was a thing of beauty, as the red Rose of Sharon, in that He died for the very sinners that crucified Him. As the Rose of Sharon, Jesus Christ gave Himself sacrificially upon the cross for sinners like you and me. This was the greatest beauty and love ever demonstrated to this world lost in sin. So the “rose of Sharon” clearly and most certainly would speak of the beauty of our Lord and the beauty of His death on our behalf.

An ancient author wrote:

“If the king were set over flowers, it would be the rose that should reign over them, being the ornament of the earth, the splendor of plants, the eye of flowers, the beauty of the field.”

Charles Weigle, another song writer, wrote the hymn, “I Have Found a Hiding Place.” He also picked up on the theme of Jesus being the Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley. Charles was sitting on his front porch in Sebring, Florida, one day in 1942. He started thinking about all the different names and titles for Christ found in the Bible. He’s called the Saviour, the Lamb of God, the Lord, our great High Priest, and dozens more meaningful things.

Charles Weigle wrote:

“Jesus, Rock of Ages let me hid in Thee,  
Jesus, Rose of Sharon, sweet Thou art to me;  
Lily of the Valley, Bright and Morning Star,  
Fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

I have found a hiding place when sore distressed,  
Jesus, Rock of Ages, strong and true;  
In a weary land I in His shadow rest,  
He is my strength in all that I do.

I have found the sweetest flower that ever grew,  
Jesus, Rose of Sharon fair and pure;  
He's my joy and comfort blessed Friend so true,  
He blooms within my heart evermore.”

Again, this song portrays the beauty of Jesus Christ as it relates to His own people.

- Have you been allowing Jesus to bloom within your heart?
- Do you have a close relationship with Him?
- Have you been enjoying the beauty of His life?
- Has His beauty captivated your soul?
- Are you drawn to Him and His splendid beauty – the beauty of His grace, mercy, love, and companionship?

From this Song another more familiar hymn, “The Lily of the Valley” was derived.

Song 2:1

"I *am* the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of the valleys."

"I have found a friend in Jesus, He's ev'rything to me,  
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul;  
The Lily of the Valley, in Him alone I see  
All I need to cleanse and make me fully whole.  
In sorrow He's my comfort, in trouble He's my stay,  
He tells me ev'ry care on Him to roll.  
He's the Lily of the Valley, the  
Bright and Morning Star,  
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

O He all my griefs has taken, and all my sorrows borne;  
In temptation He's my strong and mighty tow'r;  
I have all for Him forsaken, and all my idols torn  
From my heart, and now He keeps me by His pow'r.  
Though all the world forsake me, and Satan tempt me sore,  
Through Jesus I shall safely reach to goal.  
He's the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star,  
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

He will never, never leave me, nor yet forsake me here,  
While I live by faith and do His blessed will;  
A wall of fire about me, I've nothing now to fear,  
With His manna He my hungry soul shall fill.  
Then sweeping up to glory to see His blessed face,  
Where rivers of delight shall ever roll.  
He's the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star,  
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul."

Yes, this beloved hymn that has been passed down through the years was also developed from the Song of Solomon. Charles Fry wrote this lovely hymn as he meditated on the Song of Solomon. Who can forget the richness of that text which talks about the lily of the valleys?

The flowers mentioned as the “lily of the valleys” (Song 2:1) were likely common flowers that grew in clusters within the valleys of Palestine. There is a profusion of flowers in all the valleys along the coast south of Joppa, in the Jordan valley, around the Sea of Galilee. What are the flowers of Scripture that are mentioned as the lily of the valleys? There have been questions concerning which flower within the valley is meant. Apparently it was the common blooming iris. The iris grows wild over in Israel and one can still see a great many of them. So Jesus is beautifully portrayed as that beautiful stately rose or crocus flower that is blood red and the lovely iris flower that grew in the valleys. “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”

Did you know that when Charles Fry wrote the hymn, “The lily of the Valley” he did not make the word “valley” plural as the Scripture has it (“lily of the valleys” - Song 2:1)? He obviously used the singular to make the song sing better. The fact is this; the beauty of Christ is expressed by multitudes of beautiful flowers growing in many valleys – not just one! The beauty of our Lord is beyond the beauty of many valleys that are full of blooming flowers. Isn’t He beautiful? The Lord is beautiful. He is lovely beyond description because of what He has done for us, what He is doing for us, and what He means to us as our Shepherd.

Yes, Jesus is full of beauty because of what He means to our lives today. As Christ reveals Himself to each one of us we begin to see just how wonderful and lovely He is. In fact, Jesus wants to bloom within our hearts today and make His lovely presence known to us, even in the valley of trouble and despair.

Dear Christian friend, has Christ been the fairest of ten thousand to your soul, as the hymn states? Maybe you need a fresh awareness of the loveliness of Jesus Christ in your life?

Song 5:10 says:

“My beloved *is* white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.”

The hymn states:

“He’s the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star,  
He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.”

- Have you been experiencing the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ in your daily living?
- As you walk and talk with Him, can you say, “He altogether lovely?”
- Can you say, “He’s the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, and the fairest of ten thousand to your soul?”
- Is Christ the most beautiful person in your life?
- Is something missing in your relationship and walk with Christ?
- Has the fire gone out?
- Do you need to once again allow the beauty of His presence to capture or captivate your soul?

Jesus Christ wants to express Himself to you as the Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valleys. Christ wants to reveal the beauty of His person and work to your own heart. He wants to bloom within your heart today. Some of us have been missing out on the beauty of our Lord. We have been missing the beauty of the Lord that can only be experienced by meditation and fellowship with Him and by His constant companionship. Our precious Lord is beautiful. He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.

A chorus, written by Wendell P. Loveless in 1931 also picks up on the loveliness of Christ and this chorus was also derived from the Song of Solomon.

Song 5:16

“His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely. This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

This verse inspired Loveless to write these words:

He’s Altogether Lovely  
“Altogether lovely,  
He is altogether lovely,

And the fairest of ten thousand,  
This wonderful Friend divine;  
He gave Himself to save me,  
Now He lives in heav'n to keep me,  
He is altogether lovely,  
Is this wonderful Savior of mine."

This is a little chorus I used to sing while attending the Grand Rapids School of the Bible & Music. It was obviously taken from this Scripture in the Song of Solomon. As the Shulamite bride describes her shepherd lover, this same description can be applied to our wonderful Shepherd (Jesus Christ), who we are to love today. We are to love the Lovely One! Let us remember that Jesus Christ is altogether lovely! The beauty of His grace, mercy, love, holiness, words and companionship creates in our own heart a love for Him that will live on throughout the ages of time. He is altogether lovely. There is no other way to describe Him.

Dr. C.I. Scofield has written a tract entitled "The loveliness of Christ." Let me quote part of the tract as he unfolds to us the beauty of our precious Lord. "All other greatness has been marred by littleness. All other wisdom has been flawed by folly, all other goodness has been tainted by imperfection. Jesus Christ remains the only Being of whom without gross flattery, it could be asserted, "He is altogether lovely."

Dear friend, can you honestly say that you have been experiencing the loveliness of Jesus Christ in your own daily Christian walk? Perhaps you have lost sight of His lovely presence in your life? Maybe you need to start meditating upon the Scriptures once again and His person and pray as you do, "Lord, show me your loveliness once again."

And remember this. The Lord is also your friend! This verse in the Song says "... and this *is* my friend..." (Song 5:16).

This reminds us of several other hymns that are related to our special friendship and relationship we have with the Lord. Allow me to mention them briefly as we think of our friendship that we have with our blessed Lord. Joseph Scriven wrote these well-known words:



What Friend We Have in Jesus  
“What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear;  
What a privilege to carry  
Ev’rything to God in prayer.  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Ev’rything to God in prayer.”

Joseph Scriven was born in Ireland in 1820. He was educated at Trinity College in Dublin and was engaged to be married. The evening before their wedding, Scriven's fiancée drowned. This tragedy coupled with difficult family relationships, caused Joseph to begin following the practices and teachings of the Plymouth Brethren. Shortly after moving to Canada to become a teacher, Scriven became engaged to Eliza Roche. Tragedy struck again and Eliza passed away from illness shortly before marriage.

Joseph used the tragedies and hardships in life to empathize with the elderly and poor. Scriven used his time to saw wood for the stoves of those who were handicapped or elderly. Joseph wrote his famous hymn in 1855 to comfort his mother who still lived in Ireland. He did not seek to be noticed for it, and his authorship was only discovered by accident shortly before his death.

“And this is my friend! (Song 5:16).

Will L. Thompson wrote on this theme in 1904:

“Jesus is all the world to me,  
My Friend in trials sore.  
I go to Him for blessings, and  
He gives them o’er and o’er.  
He sends the sunshine and the rain;  
He sends the harvest’s golden grain:  
Sunshine and rain, harvest of grain—  
He’s my Friend.”

James G. Small wrote these words in 1866:

“I’ve found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!  
He loved me ere I knew Him;  
He drew me with the cords of love,  
And thus He bound me to Him.  
And round my heart still closely twine  
Those ties which naught can sever,  
For I am His, and He is mine, Forever and forever.

I’ve found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!  
He bled, He died to save me;  
And not alone the gift of life,  
But His own self He gave me.  
Naught that I have my own I call,  
I hold it for the Giver:  
My heart, my strength, my life, my all,  
Are His, and His forever.

I’ve found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!  
So kind, and true, and tender,  
So wise a Counsellor and Guide,  
So mighty a Defender!  
From Him who loves me now so well,  
What pow’r my soul can sever?  
Shall life or death, or earth or hell?  
No; I am His forever.”

“And this is my friend! (Song 5:16).

What a wonderful friendship we can have today with the living Lord! This day to day friendship can be experienced in our lives as we walk close to the Lord and live life on a different level and higher plane than the world. The Lord is our Friend and constant companion in life. He is our Friend to guide us, strengthen us, correct us, teach us, calm us and put His arms around us and just love us.

If you were to visit the Florida home of Thomas Edison, you'd be intrigued by a path in his garden called "The Walk of Friendship." What makes it unique is the fact that each stone was contributed by a different acquaintance of the inventor. This memorial path is symbolic. As Christians, we all walk on stones of helpfulness provided by friends, especially the greatest Friend that we have in our lives today - Jesus Christ. And it's His friendship that brings something of value into our lives. ... And this *is* my friend..." (Song 5:16).

Someone has said that a friend is:  
"A push when you've stopped  
A word when you're lonely  
A guide when you're searching  
A smile when you're sad  
A song when you're glad."

Another chorus of great significance that is derived from the Song of Solomon is the chorus "His Banner Over Me Is Love."

Song 2:4

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me *was* love."

Did you ever sing this song at Sunday School, "His banner over me is love"? I used to love singing this song. In fact, I still sing it! It's in our hymn book at church. I remember the hand motions we would do as we sang it, picturing God's love as a banner flying above our head.

The Song of Solomon was talking about the love between a husband and wife. The Shulamite bride likened her husband's love and provision for her as a banquet and banner. These two expressions symbolized His loving provision and protection over her life. But this same love could certainly be applied to Christ's love for us as well. His banner over our head speaks of this love which is evidenced by His protection and safety that He brings to us.

His Banner Over Me Is Love  
“Jesus is the Rock of my salvation,  
His banner over me is love.  
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His banner over me is love.  
Jesus is the Rock of my salvation,  
His banner over me is love.  
His banner over me is love!”

This is another little chorus that many of us still sing today. It was written by B. C. Laurelton back in 1964. Our friend, Alfred B. Smith, revised and arranged this chorus for the particular hymnal that we use in the church where I pastor. The lines of this chorus have been borrowed from the words of the Shulamite as she described how her own Shepherd husband expressed love to her.

First, let’s reflect on the banquet. The shepherd husband would provide whatever he could for his wife. It made no difference how much or little the provision for her was at the banqueting table. This is because what the shepherd husband gave to her was seasoned with love. When something is seasoned with love it becomes a banquet to us no matter what proportion it might be.

The banquet speaks of the husband’s provision for his bride and therefore the application to Christ and the believer today is easy to see. Christ provides His Church (the Bride of Christ) with a banquet of blessings so that we can say, “He brought me to the banqueting house” and “My cup runneth over” (Ps. 23:5). The Lord meets our needs in life with His banquet table or the table of His provision.

Philippians 4:19

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

When we are Christ’s, we can live in the banquet room of His spiritual blessings. In other words, He meets all of spiritual needs for our Christian journey. In fact, the Lord meets all of our truest needs, whether they be

physical or spiritual. He provides us with saving grace, sustaining grace, peace and satisfaction in life, and fills our pockets full of many rich blessings.

I recall watching a little boy filling his pockets full of candy at one of our church picnics. This little guy wanted to have a continual feast while playing on the playground. He left with his pockets bulging! My friend that is what Christ does for us today. He brings us to the banqueting room and fills our pockets full of His blessings. And the fact that “he brought me” into this banqueting room is pure grace. I didn’t wonder in by mistake. He brought me into this wonderful place of blessing and in New Testament language, “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

“He brought me to the banqueting house...”

And it is here that He provides for us spiritual blessings on a daily basis.

Psalm 23:5

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”

Psalm 78:19

“Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”

The answer is – yes!

In the hymn, “The Sands of Time Are Sinking,” written by Anne R. Cousins, she speaks of this banquet of blessings with Christ when she wrote:

“Oh I am my Beloved’s,  
And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His House of wine.  
I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e’en where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel’s land.”

“... and his banner over me *was* love.”

What does this expression mean in this well beloved chorus? During Bible times and even today, flags and banners are raised during battles to rally the troops and raise morale. The flag or banner was carried into battle signifying that the army of the king was protecting his people.

It's also interesting that the war banners or flags were always displayed in the banquet room. Again, they were a visible sign of safety and protection for the people of the land. Wherever the banner was displayed it always signified that a particular area was the property and protection of the king.

It would seem that the Shulamite was saying that her husband was not only the provider (the banquet room) but also her protector and property (the banner) of her life. And she viewed this banner of protection over her life as a banner of love. “... and his banner over me *was* love.” In a similar way, the Lord is our banner of protection and safety. We are His property and He is out to protect us unto the end! His protection is assured for God loves us with an everlasting love!

Do you sometimes sense that you could use a banner from God? It would be so good to see God visibly standing by our side holding a sign that says, “Keep it up! Stay strong! You're on the right track. I've got your back. I love you!” Well, even though I may not see the visible banner, I know it's there. It is the banner of God's loving protection and provision. If you look really close, you might see it when a friend shares sweet words of encouragement from God's Word, or when you listen to His Word and your heart soaks it up, or when the Holy Spirit gives you a peace that transcends all human comprehension or understanding.

Look close and look up in faith, you will see that His banner of love is flying above you right now!

Psalm 60:4

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.”

“Let the flag fly high on the castle of my heart,  
On the castle of my heart, on the castle of my heart.  
Let the flag fly high on the castle of my heart,  
For the King is in residence there.”

Our precious Lord has promised to protect His own children for time and eternity. His banner is waving over our heads. We must see it with the eye of faith? We can be sure that He will safely keep us to the end because written on this banner is the word “love.” Jesus loves His own unto the end!

John 13:1 says, “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” God is love (1 John 4:16) and this love is displayed in that He keeps His own children under His banner of loving protection and safety. This is true in the realm of His sovereign care over our lives and His spiritual safety and protection over our eternal soul.

Romans 8:38-39

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“... and his banner over me *was* love.”

Friend, the banner of the Lord is a banner of love. He promises to keep waving the banner of His safety, security, and love all through our Christian life.

“Jesus is the Rock of my salvation,  
His banner over me is love.  
His banner over me is love!”

Another verse in the Song of Solomon has been the background for various hymns dealing with the Lord as our Rock.

In an art gallery in Florence, Italy, a visitor can see two rather similar paintings. The one pictures a stormy sea with wild waves and fierce

lightning flashing across the sky. In the raging waters the face of a drowning man with an expression of utter despair can be seen just above the surface. The other painting shows an ocean tossed by an equally violent tempest, but in the midst of the waters is a huge rock against which the white-capped breakers dash in vain. In a crevice of that boulder a pigeon is sitting on her nest, quiet and undisturbed by the wild fury of the elements.

This brings to mind the lovely words from Song of Solomon where the bridegroom compares his beloved bride to a dove that finds safety and repose "in the clefts of the rock."

Song 2:14

"O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely."

The "clefts of the rock" speak of hiding between the openings or spaces of giant rocks. In the Song of Solomon, this was speaking about the safety and provision that the shepherd husband gave to his bride. It is a beautiful expression of how the Lord cares for His own people today. It points to a place of safety that He gives us during the storms of life. Yes, the Rock pictures the safety that we have in the Lord.

The "secret places of the stairs" is more literally rendered "secrecy of the steep places." It refers to those hiding places, the cracks and crevices in the rocks, way up in the cliffs. The doves or rock pigeons would fly up there and find safety in the clefts of the rocks. These would be the secret places of safety for the doves.

My friend, our Great Shepherd has taken us into the clefts of the rock and transferred us to the secret places of the stairs! What safety and rest we can have in the Lord's hand. All of this is brought out in various hymns which centered upon our safety in God as our Rock.



### Rock of Ages

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow’r.”

Have you found this secret place? Are you hiding in the cleft of the rock? No matter what you are facing in this life, you can be sure that there is a secret place for you in the cleft of the rock. God will keep you by His grace.

Frances J. Crosby wrote another familiar song in 1890. You will recognize it.

“A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,  
A wonderful Savior to me;  
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,  
Where rivers of pleasure I see.

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,  
That shadows a dry, thirsty land;  
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,  
And covers me there with His hand,  
And covers me there with His hand.”

Who can forget about the glorious picture that God’s children are in the cleft of the rock? Who can deny that this speaks of the safety, security, strength and serenity that comes from the Lord during the storms of life? The Lord is our rock of protection today. In Him we find safety, rest and repose.

We are His doves and He is the Rock that brings this wonderful stability and sense of peace into our lives no matter what storms we must pass through. He hides us in the secret place. There is a secret place for you! There is a place of calmness and serenity for you in the cleft of the rock.

The Lord is pictured here and in many other passages of Scripture as our rock of safety.

Psalm 18:2

“The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.”

There are other hymns that pick up this same theme about the Lord being our Rock of safety, strength, stability and serenity.

Another hymn is similar in its theme that captures the thought of hiding in the secret places in the rock.

#### Hiding in Thee

“O safe to the Rock that is higher than I,  
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;  
So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine would I be;  
Thou blest “Rock of Ages,” I’m hiding in Thee.

In the calm of the noontide, in sorrow’s lone hour,  
In times when temptation casts o’er me its pow’r;  
In the tempests of life, on its wide, heaving sea,  
Thou blest “Rock of Ages,” I’m hiding in Thee.

How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe,  
I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe;  
How often, when trials like sea-billows roll,  
Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.

Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee,  
Thou blest “Rock of Ages,”  
I’m hiding in Thee.”

William Cushing wrote these lovely words. Ira Sankey arranged the music. Together this has become a favorite classic of every Christian.

Here is another one.

A Shelter in the Time of Storm  
“The Lord’s our Rock, in Him we hide.  
A shelter in the time of storm;  
Secure whatever ill betide,  
A shelter in the time of storm.

A shade by day, defense by night,  
A shelter in the time of storm;  
No fears alarm, no foes affright,  
A shelter in the time of storm.

The raging storms may round us beat,  
A shelter in the time of storm;  
We’ll never leave our safe retreat,  
A shelter in the time of storm.

O Rock divine, O Refuge dear,  
A shelter in the time of storm;  
Be Thou our helper ever near,  
A shelter in the time of storm;

O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,  
A weary land, a weary land;  
O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,  
A shelter in the time of storm.”

The Song of Solomon also provides for us in picture format the wonderful fellowship and relationship that we can have with God.

Song 7:11 says:

“Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.”

These beautiful words have been seen in the hymn, “My God and I.”

“My God and I  
“My God and I go in the field together,  
We walk and talk as good friends should and do;  
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter,  
My God and I walk thru the meadows hue.”

This hymn was written by I. B. Sergei way back in 1935. The first verse of this precious hymn, which I have quoted, is reflected in the words that the Shulamite bride spoke to her shepherd husband (“let us go forth into the field”). She longed to flee away with her lover into the fields so that she could enjoy his loves and have a deep intimacy and fellowship with him.

What a beautiful picture this becomes of the intimate fellowship and relationship that the believer is to have with their Great Shepherd! We are to go forth “into the field” with God in order to commune and fellowship with Him. The fields of fellowship and communion with God should be our constant desire in life. There is a great need today for God’s people to return to the fields!

We must come to that place once again where we enjoy the fellowship and presence of the Lord in a deeper way. The field speaks of the place of solitude and quietness where we can reflect upon God and enjoy the fellowship of His person. All of us must depart into the field and meditate upon God and commune with Him daily. We must join hands with our Lord and experience His daily friendship and fellowship.

- Have you been walking close to the Lord?
- How close are you to Him?
- Are as close to the Lord as you were last year at this same time?
- Are you drifting from the Lord?

Andrew Murray expressed this concern of staying close to God:  
“How many Christians look upon it as a burden and a duty and a difficulty to get alone with God! That is the great hindrance to our Christian life everywhere.”

There is one more hymn that I would like to share with you as we peek into the Song of Solomon. It was written by Wade Robinson and has become one of my favorites over the years.

My wife and I wanted this particular hymn to be sung at our wedding. It's the precious hymn that is derived from similar statements that each lover gave to one another in the Song of Solomon. They echoed back and forth, again and again, sharing of their love one for another. These precious statements in the Song are a beautiful expression of their love relationship between each other. Let me give you some verses in the Song and then see if you can guess what hymn is being derived from these verses.

Song 2:16

"My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his: he feedeth among the lilies."

Song 6:3

"I *am* my beloved's, and my beloved *is* mine: he feedeth among the lilies."

Song 7:10

"I *am* my beloved's, and his desire *is* toward me."

These beautiful words of love, expressed to one another in the marriage relationship, became the backdrop to one of the most beloved hymns of all time, "I am His, and He is Mine."

I am His, and He Is Mine"  
"Loved with everlasting love,  
Led by grace that love to know;  
Spirit, breathing from above,  
Thou hast taught me it is so!  
Oh, this full and perfect peace!  
Oh, this transport all divine!  
In a love which cannot cease,  
I am His, and He is mine.

Things that once were wild alarms  
Cannot now disturb my rest;

Closed in everlasting arms,  
Pillowed on the loving breast.  
Oh, to lie forever here,  
Doubt, and care, and self resign,  
While He whispers in my ear—  
I am His and He is mine.

His forever, only His;  
Who the Lord and me shall part?  
Ah, with what a rest of bliss,  
Christ can fill the loving heart!  
Heav'n and earth may fade and flee,  
First born light in gloom decline;  
But while God and I shall be,  
I am His, and He is mine."

As these two lovers conversed back and forth expressing their deep love toward one another, so the child of God is to converse with their precious Lord. Together there is to be this wonderful exchange of deep love for one another that comes from a loving relationship that will last forever.

We know that we are loved with an everlasting love! Therefore, as we allow this love relationship to grow with the Lord there is an indescribable closeness that we will experience with Him. In fact, everything will seem to come alive as we fellowship with God. As the hymn expresses, when seeing His handiwork in all of creation, we will sense the nearness, dearness and sweetness of God toward our lives. We will experience this love relationship with the Lord. We will sense God's intimate love toward us. That's why the hymnwriter wrote these precious words.

"Heav'n above is softer blue,  
Earth around is sweeter green!  
Something lives in ev'ry hue  
Christless eyes have never seen:  
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,  
Doubt, and care, and self resign,  
While He whispers in my ear—  
I am His, and He is mine."

Song 6:3

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:

God loves me! I am His and He loves me! And I can love Him back with all of my heart. This love relationship with the Lord produces peace, assurance, strength, and hope in the most trying times of life.

Friend, there is something more to life than just Sunday through Saturday! It is a love relationship with Jesus Christ! We should be growing deeper in this love relationship with Him. Oh my friend, are you in love with the Lord these days? Or have you left you first love?

Revelation 2:4

"Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Do you hear the whisper? No, it's not an audible whisper. However, it's a very quiet whisper within the deep recesses of your soul. What is the whisper saying? "I am yours forever! I love you!"

"While He whispers in my ear—  
I am His, and He is mine."

In the middle of the soloist's number at church, the young grandson Chandler tugged on his grandmother's sleeve and whispered, "She can't sing very well, can she?" Knowing the woman had a deep love for the Lord, I said, "Chandler, she sings from her heart. That's what makes it good." He nodded thoughtfully. The mother then recounts this. Several days later as he and I were singing along with the car radio, Chandler stopped and said, "Nana, you sing from your heart, don't you?"

Somehow, about forty percent of churchgoers seem to have picked up the idea that singing in church is only for professional singers. The truth is that "singing is for all believers." The relevant question is not, "Do you have a voice?" but "Do you have a song?" Is there a song in your heart?

Jesus Christ should be the inward song of your heart and life that should translate to your lips. Every believer, who deeply loves the Lord, will have a song to sing. And it will be a song that cannot be silenced.

Psalm 69:30

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.”

Song 1:1 says:

“The song of songs, which *is* Solomon's.”

We may not be gifted to stand before people and sing but we can sing together with God’s saints and express to others, through our outward praise, that Christ is our Song of Songs! Through our singing we can let others know that Jesus Christ is our “song of songs” or the most precious Friend and prized possession that we have in life.

Our wonderful relationship with the Lord will result in an outward song of joyful praise that will demonstrate to both the Lord and others that we are in love with Him and that He is our song of highest praise.

I trust that Jesus will become your “song of songs.” It’s my prayer that you will let others know by your voice of praise that He is the song of your heart and life today.

“My heart is filled with melody,  
To Christ my Lord, My very life belongs.  
Since He came in I cannot help,  
But ever sing My Song of Songs.

My Song of Songs is Christ my Savior,  
Of Him my heart shall ever sing.  
He fills my life with joyous melody,  
My Song of Songs is Jesus.”